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FM AMEMBASSY CONAKRY  
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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 CONAKRY 000091

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/04/2018  
TAGS: PGOV ELAB PREL ASEC GV  
SUBJECT: UNION LEADER SAYS IT IS TIME FOR A COUP

REF: A. CONAKRY 0067

¶B. CONAKRY 0068

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

¶1. (S) SUMMARY. Visibly disheartened and in poor health, union leader Rabiatou told Poloff that the only way out of Guinea's political impasse is a coup d'etat. She relentlessly criticized the prime minister, apparently seeing him as yet another corrupt official betraying the public trust. Rabiatou also commented on her perceptions of underlying ethnic tensions, union divisions, and her personal political ambitions. She looked beaten down and was unconvincing that any of the political mechanisms in place, including the consensus government, are going to successfully achieve the political change she says the people are demanding. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Poloff met privately with union leader Mme. Serah Rabiatou on January 31 at the Embassy. Rabiatou is the Secretary General of the CNTG (National Confederation of

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Guinean Workers) as well as the co-chair of Guinea's Unions-Intersyndicale, an umbrella organization representing a number of individual member labor unions.

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THE PRIME MINISTER HAS FAILED  
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¶3. (SBU) Rabiatou noted that she had attended the January 29 inaugural meeting of the Committee de Suivi (reftel A), which she said is unlikely to produce acceptable results. She criticized Prime Minister Kouyate for choosing to travel to the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa rather than delaying his trip and going to the committee meeting. According to Rabiatou, Kouyate left at least five days before the summit and could have stayed in Conakry one extra day in order to attend the meeting. It is negligence on his part and demonstrates his indifference,, Rabiatou commented. She noted that the next committee meeting is scheduled for February 7, saying that the various representatives are supposed to consult with their constituents and then come back to the table in order to negotiate a plan of action for the committee.

¶4. (C) With disgust evident on her face, Rabiatou detailed a laundry list of complaints against the prime minister. She said that the PM failed to compete numerous contracts, instead awarding them to individuals personally connected to him. On the controversial government restructuring decree, Rabiatou said she personally told the PM not to print it because it contained too many errors. He printed it

anyway, which is now causing lots of problems,, she said. She noted that bread is increasingly expensive and that market conditions in general are worse than they were in 2007. Despite some improvements in electricity and water, Rabiatou said that basic utilities remain a significant problem. She also criticized Kouyate for holding his cabinet meeting on January 29 since he had told the unions that he would not hold another cabinet meeting until the former minister of communications is reinstated. Rabiatou questioned the government audits that Kouyate was supposed to do, noting that they have apparently been finished, but not released to the public.

15. (C) Continuing in the same vein, Rabiatou said that the second point in the January 27 Accords demands justice with respect to the corruption case against Conte crony Mamadou Syllah. She said that Syllah continues to act with impunity, noting that his private company, Futurlec, continued to advertise on public radio and television channels throughout 2007. Rabiatou also said that Syllah is paying at least four different unions in an effort to keep the unions divided.

16. (C) According to Rabiatou, Guineans are even more disappointed today than they were a year ago and it is because Kouyate has failed. She said that Kouyate is simply conducting a masquerade before the international community. He is trying to convince everyone to hand over as much money as possible so that he can turn around and put it in his pocket,, she said.

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IT IS TIME FOR A COUP  
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17. (S) Rabiatou told poloff in my personal opinion, the only answer at this point is to organize a coup d,etat and then work through a period of political transition.,

CONAKRY 00000091 002 OF 003

According to Rabiatou, all of Guinea,s current leaders are only thinking about themselves. I never wished for things to turn out this way,, she said. Poloff asked Rabiatou if she knew of any coup plots in the works. She shrugged her shoulders and said I am not the only one who is talking about it., However, Rabiatou added that the military is increasingly divided, as are other sectors of Guinean society. She also said that she does not see an alternative to a coup since she doubts the Committee de Suivi will come up with a workable solution before March 31. It is time for a revolution,, she said. (COMMENT. Rabiatou,s husband was a high ranking police official and several of her family members are either in the military or in the police. END COMMENT.)

18. (C) Poloff asked Rabiatou about her relationship with the presidency, a question that brought visible disdain to her face. She said that she has nothing to do with the presidency. I never forget,, she said, that when we were arrested in 2007, the President looked over at me and told his guard to bring him that small lady. He looked directly at me as he told his entourage ) let them go, I will get them bit by bit; I am a general and I may lose a battle, but I will not lose the war.,

19. (C) Noting recent important developments such as the return to a funded IMF program and some progress towards elections, Poloff told Rabiatou that Guinea stands to lose much if it should descend into violence again. Rabiatou appeared unconvinced as she asked who is going to benefit from this progress ) it is only a small group, the same group., Poloff asked Rabiatou if she could envision an alternative, non-violent solution. According to Rabiatou, the only possible answer is a national dialogue that can develop a concrete strategy that would include modifying the constitution, holding Kouyate accountable for his performance and dismissing him if necessary, and then solidifying the

power of the PM position. However, Rabiatou said that the president is unlikely to accept any solution that is offered.

We can only have peace if we work together this way,, she said. She added the only other alternative is if God call Conte back to his side.,,

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ETHNIC PARANOIA  
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¶10. (C) Unprompted, Rabiatou discussed the ethnic undertones to Guinea,s current political dynamic. As a Peuhl, she said that many Peuhls see Kouyate as a potential throwback to Sekou Toure because of his Malinke background. Rabiatou said that both of her parents as well as brothers, uncles, cousins and others were killed by Sekou Toure in Camp Boiro, Toure,s notorious political prison. According to Rabiatou, the massive elephant statue that the Guinean Government recently erected in honor of the country,s soccer team mascot, only serves to remind Peuhls of their suffering under Toure since the elephant was a symbol of Toure,s regime. Rabiatou said that Peuhls were disproportionately targeted by Toure and fear further victimization under Kouyate, or another Malinke leader. Because of Sekou Toure,s legacy, no one, no Soussous, no Forestiers, no Peuhls, no one will accept to have a Malinke leader of this country,, she said.

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I NEVER WANTED THE STRIKE  
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¶11. (C) Turning to the aborted strike of January 10, Rabiatou said that she was never in favor of resuming the strike and that she relentlessly advocated for it to be suspended. According to her, it would have been a catastrophe,, if it had gone forward since violence would have been likely. Rabiatou said she was in the minority since the other unions were pushing to hold the strike immediately and did not even want to allow for time for negotiations. She said that she received numerous calls from her constituents in the interior who begged her to derail the strike because people were not ready for it.

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UNION DIVISIONS  
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¶12. (C) Poloff asked about internal divisions within the unions. Rabiatou said I cannot lie, Dr. Fofana and I are not on the same page. He firmly supports Kouyate.,, (NOTE. Dr. Fofana is the co-chair of Unions-Intersyndicale. END NOTE). Rabiatou said that for her, the political conflict

CONAKRY 00000091 003 OF 003

revolves around whether or not people remain in poverty, not on any one political personality. She noted that the International Labor Organization is sending a team to Conakry in early February in order to try and resolve some of the internal tensions between the various unions.

¶13. (S) In response to a question about Fofana,s personal motivations, Rabiatou said that he is highly ambitious politically and is looking for a position of power., She noted that Fofana did not initially support Kouyate as a candidate for PM, but now does so wholeheartedly because they share the same ethnicity. Rabiatou added that she is not sure what Fofana is up to. She mentioned a conference in June of 2007 that both she and he were supposed to attend. She said that Fofana went early because he said he was going to visit with is family. However, when she got there, Rabiatou inadvertently discovered that Fofana, along with three other Malinkes, had been meeting with French military officials. These were the same men that organize coups in other countries,, she said.

HERE FOR THE PEOPLE

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¶14. (C) Poloff asked Rabiatou if she has political aspirations of her own. She said that her sole ambition is for Guinea to share its riches equitably so that her children will benefit from Guinea's future prosperity. I do not have to have personal ambitions to contribute to this cause,, she said. She added that if people pushed her in that direction, she might consider it. However, she noted that she had been approached by various politicians, including Cellou Diallo of the opposition UFDG, but that she had refused to join them. I am not interested in being on the National Assembly and I have not considered the presidential elections,, she said.

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COMMENT

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¶15. (C) Rabiatou looked tired and unwell. Her health has been poor for several weeks and she looked as if she had not slept well in a long time. When asked about her health, she said she was not doing well at all and attributed it to enormous stress and lack of sleep. Throughout the meeting, her mannerisms and facial expressions suggested hopeless discouragement and deep disappointment.

¶16. (S) Rabiatou was very clear in her assessment ) she sees no way out except removal of the president. This is a sentiment that has been echoed by a number of contacts in recent weeks, including opposition leader Sidya Toure (reftel B). While many contacts appear to be supporting a mechanism for dialogue and general progress towards elections as a viable solution, few contacts seem to think this strategy will actually work. Like Rabiatou, they see the president as the main obstacle and seem to be waiting for him to disappear.

¶17. (S) With divisions evident within every organizational actor in Guinea's political drama, it is never quite clear where individuals stand. Rabiatou has generated much distrust among her union colleagues who reportedly have reason to believe that she may be conspiring against them. This may be true, but at the same time, she comes off as genuine. Her distaste for both the president and the prime minister were blatantly obvious and she seemed genuinely uninterested in personal political gain, which raises a question. If she is not supporting the president or the prime minister, and she is not seeking to position herself, then on whose behalf is she acting? It is possible that she may genuinely see herself as the people,s advocate ) and then again, there is just enough ambiguity there to keep everyone guessing. END COMMENT.

CARTER